

## THE KILLER INSTINCT

BLACK

A WOMAN'S VOICE

WOMAN (V.O.)

So how does it feel to be paid  
fifty thousand dollars for a  
painting?

FADE IN:

CLOSEUP - PAINTING

A house, realistic. Hard-edged shadows delineate the exterior walls, the trees, the yard. Open windows, well-appointed interior, devoid of people.

CLASSICAL MUSIC, almost but not quite overwhelmed by traffic sounds: HORNS BLARE, tires WHINE on asphalt, brakes SQUEAL.

A MAN'S VOICE

MAN (V.O.)

(slightly amused)

Pretty good. How does it feel  
to have "Southland" Magazine  
pay you to write about how  
much I get paid?

The music overtakes the traffic noise.

PULL BACK to reveal:

INT. ARTIST'S STUDIO - DAY

A big, airy loft. Stark white walls covered with large paintings, all of houses and buildings, casting sharp shadows in harsh mid-day light. No people in any of them.

A cluster of furniture in the center of the room. JOE WAKEFIELD, 30-ish, sits on the sofa, his arms resting across the back of the sofa, smiling, relaxed. Across from him in a wooden chair is ROSEMARY FLETCHER, late 20's, serious and intense, pen poised above a steno notebook in her lap. Coffee cups on the low table between them.

Rosemary looks up and smiles tentatively.

ROSEMARY

Point taken.

A tabby cat jumps into his lap and Joe strokes the cat, which begins to purr loudly.

JOE

So you can smile.

Rosemary looks back down at her notes, tugs a lock of hair into place behind her ear.

The telephone RINGS in another part of the studio. Joe looks at his watch, gently sets the cat on the sofa and stands up.

JOE

I'd better take this. Sorry.

He exits to answer the phone. His voice offscreen is muffled.

Rosemary gets up and walks slowly along one wall of paintings, studying them. She comes to an open doorway, sees more paintings in the next room, casts a furtive glance in the direction of Joe's voice, and goes inside.

EXT. ROOM IN JOE'S STUDIO - DAY

The room is full of paintings, but these are all of people: a group sitting at a long table, dressed somberly, as if for a funeral; a woman packing a suitcase; a man holding an empty box. Rosemary is captivated by a painting of a woman at a window, sheer white curtains billowing on either side of her, a look of acute longing on her face.

The cat comes and rubs up against Rosemary's ankle and she picks it up and rubs its chin.

Joe enters, looking flustered.

JOE

Don't pay much attention to these. They're experiments. Nobody likes 'em.

Rosemary hands him the cat.

ROSEMARY

Nice cat. (beat) I do.

Joe laughs.

JOE

Really? Why?

Rosemary shrugs, gestures toward the painting of the woman at the window.

ROSEMARY

There's something so moving about them. Something real.

Joe motions her back into the larger room.

JOE

The others look fake?

ROSEMARY

I didn't mean that!

JOE

It's okay. Anyway, Nikki hates 'em. She'll never let me show them in her gallery.

He resumes his pose on the sofa, looks up as if daring her to do the same. Rosemary sits, retrieves her tablet and pen, studies her notes a minute, clears her throat.

ROSEMARY

Does she have an exclusive right to your work?

Joe shrugs.

JOE

Nikki's the one who got me the 50 grand. You tell me.

ROSEMARY

Look, I'm a writer, not a critic. I didn't mean to offend you, and -

The cat springs to the floor.

JOE

You didn't.

His gaze is direct and searching. Rosemary tucks her hair behind her ear, closes the notebook, and pops the cap on her pen.

ROSEMARY

I think I have enough for now.

JOE

Don't write about them.

He gestures toward the room with the paintings Rosemary liked.

ROSEMARY

It's you they sent me to profile, not your work.

Rosemary stands up and extends her hand.

ROSEMARY (CONT'D)

Thanks for your time, Mr. Wakefield.

JOE

Joe.

Joe takes her hand, lingers just a few seconds longer than necessary.

JOE (CONT'D)

I enjoyed most of it. You ask good questions, Ms. Fletcher.

ROSEMARY

Rosemary.

Joe still holds her hand.

JOE

Rosemary. And thanks for . . . for liking the stuff nobody else does.

Rosemary withdraws her hand.

ROSEMARY

You're welcome. (beat) I may need to call you to clarify a few things.

JOE

I'll be disappointed if you  
don't.

Rosemary laughs, opens the door and exits.

EXT. JOE'S STUDIO - DAY

JOE'S P.O.V.:

Rosemary gets into her car. Rolls down the window and  
glances up, waves.

ANGLE ON JOE AT THE WINDOW

The cat jumps on the sill. Joe picks it up, his gaze on  
Rosemary. His expression is as wistful as that of the  
woman in the painting.

EXT. ROSEMARY'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON WINDOW BY FRONT DOOR

The snarling head of a German shepherd dog lunges at the  
glass. The dog BARKS furiously.

WIDER TO REVEAL

ALAN WRIGHT, tall and good-looking, impeccably dressed in  
a dark business suit, lurches away from the window. He  
collects his composure and looks around, sheepishly.

Rosemary's car screeches into the driveway. Alan glances  
pointedly at his watch.

Rosemary rushes to Alan, holding the steno notebook she  
had at the interview, and wraps her arms around him. The  
dog stops barking, whines and then is quiet.

ROSEMARY

Sorry. Traffic was horrible.

Alan pats her back.

ALAN

I know better than to expect  
you to be where you say you'll  
be when you say you'll be.

Rosemary pulls away and pokes his arm playfully.

ROSEMARY

Oh, right, Mr. Punctuality.

Alan kisses the top of her head and whispers in her ear.

ALAN

I lied about the time the party starts.

ROSEMARY

You shit!

Rosemary unlocks and opens the door. PHOENIX, a black and tan German shepherd mix, leaps on her, whimpering with pleasure. Rosemary nuzzles the dog.

INT. ROSEMARY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A sparsely but tastefully furnished room. On the fireplace mantle is a large photograph of Rosemary, smiling gleefully, between two older men.

Rosemary tosses her purse and the notebook on the floor and kneels down, nuzzling Phoenix. Alan eases into the room as Phoenix looks up at him and growls. Alan recoils.

ROSEMARY

Alan, you know he's just doing that because -

ALAN

I know, I know. The fucking dog knows I'm afraid of -

Rosemary rises, motioning for Phoenix to stay. She sashays up to Alan, puts her fingers to his lips.

ROSEMARY

How inelegant your vocabulary becomes when you're afraid.

He takes her hand away and kisses it.

ALAN

Shall I start spouting polysyllables?

ROSEMARY

Only if you want to miss Marley's party.

She looks soulfully into his eyes. Alan returns the look, then gives her a playful swat on the butt.

ALAN

Go change clothes. Now.

Rosemary looks down at herself.

ROSEMARY

What's wrong with what I'm wearing?

ALAN

(indulgently)

You can't show up at the first fundraiser in Marley's campaign looking like you just came from a baseball game.

Rosemary's hands go to her hips in mock indignation.

ROSEMARY

Well, pardon me for having a job that doesn't require starched shirts! Oh, I know it's just a piddly little job compared to yours, but-

Alan puts his hands on her shoulders and his forehead against hers.

ALAN

Your job is very important, Rosemary. Now will you please get a move on? Pretty please?

Rosemary pulls away.

ROSEMARY

All right, you win. Why don't you go on ahead. I'll change into something more acceptable and catch up with you. (beat) I was going to tell you an amusing tale about the artist who tried to seduce me, but -

Alan gives her hair a playful tug.

ALAN

But you can tell me later,  
can't you?

He nuzzles her neck and she practically purrs with pleasure. Then he pulls away.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I'll explain to Marley. Now go  
change clothes!

Rosemary's lower lips pokes out in a pout, and Alan kisses the top of her head again.

ALAN

When we come back I'm going to  
seduce you with long words.

ROSEMARY

Promise?

ALAN

Indubitably.

Rosemary giggles.

ROSEMARY

That's a good start.

Alan leans closer to her and whispers in her ear.

ALAN

Infringement. Euphemism.

Rosemary pretends to shiver with pleasure, and Alan nibbles her ear.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Synonym. (beat) Now go get  
dressed.

Alan gives her one more quick kiss and exits. Phoenix, on the alert, watches his departure and then relaxes. Rosemary pretends to frown at Phoenix.

ROSEMARY

Jealousy does not become you.

Phoenix wags his tail. Rosemary gets down on the floor and grabs Phoenix around the neck. The two of them wrestle like children. Rosemary laughs with delight.



ROSEMARY

Why don't you like him,  
Phoenix?

(in a high-pitched  
voice)

Why?

Phoenix barks in response, puts his paw on her shoulder and licks her face. Rosemary laughs again. Her face is relaxed, at peace.

INT. ROSEMARY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Rosemary enters, dressed for a party. Phoenix follows. Rosemary leans over and pats his head.

ROSEMARY

Okay, puppy, I gotta get to  
the party before it's over.  
Don't wanna hurt Marley's  
feelings. Don't wanna piss  
Alan off.

Phoenix barks. Rosemary rubs the top of his head. She does a slow turn, looking around the room, ticking off items on her fingers. She gazes for a moment at the photo on the mantle and smiles.

ROSEMARY (CONT'D)

Okay, everything's secure. You  
watch the house. Eat anybody  
except me who comes in.

(in her best  
"Terminator" imitation)

I'll be back.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Rosemary's car darting through traffic, cutting in and out.

INT. ROSEMARY'S CAR - NIGHT

Her fingers drum on the steering wheel. Rock music blares from the radio. Headlights cut across her face.

ROSEMARY

Come on, come on!

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

A Lincoln Town Car runs the light and plows into Rosemary's car, which crumples in the impact and spins around, the HORN BLARING. The horn continues to sound as Rosemary's car crashes into the curb and comes to rest.